PortalHalf-Life: Ghost Ship

by iammemyself

Summary: Alyx Vance and Gordon Freeman locate the Borealis, but they might not find what they were expecting to find...

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Portal/Half-Life: Ghost Ship

Indiana

**Characters: GLaDOS (version 1.09), GLaDOS (post Portal 2 version), Alyx Vance, Dr Gordon Freeman **

Setting: Post Half-Life 2: Episode 2

"Oh my God… they said it was big, but I never imagined _this_…"

Gordon Freeman stepped back so that Alyx Vance could step off the ladder attached to the side of the ship. She was right; the ship certainly was impressive. One had to wonder what business Aperture Science had had with building such a vessel. It had been part of a teleportation experiment, that much was clear: judging from its unfortunate location, it really had gone missing by mistake. Aperture had never been known for rigorous safety standards, but Gordon did not agree with Dr Kleiner's assessment that the accident had occurred because safety had been lax; it merely looked as though Aperture had tried to achieve more than they could handle.

And yet the experiment had worked. Whether the _Borealis_ had been ready for her maiden voyage or not, here she was, an icebreaker embedded in Arctic ice. Aperture had once had local teleportation figured out, to some extent.

It was fortunate they hadn't completed their research, because if they had, and if everyone at Aperture had not gone suddenly AWOL one

day in the early nineties for a reason as yet undiscovered, the Combine for certain would have their hands on this technology, and everything would be lost.

Gordon followed Alyx across the slick deck of the _Borealis_, her stepping lightly to keep her balance, him placing confidence that the thick treads of the HEV suit would prevent him from slipping. The ship was stuck lengthwise into an ice shelf, with less than half of it exposed to the open air. He knew there wouldn't be very many ways to gain entry to the ship, but he was content to let Alyx locate one. Distraction would be good for her.

"What I don't understand," Alyx remarked, arms flailing as she struggled not to fall over, "is why there are so many _weapons_ on this thing. Look at it. You'd almost think they were going to go attack a country with it, or something. This thing is pretty cool, Gordon. Too bad their CEO was a nutcase. Aha! We can get in through here, I think â€" yep. Gimme a sec."

She had found a window of some sort. She fought with the window for a few moments, then Gordon nudged her aside and drew his crowbar. She laughed. "Of course. I should have just left you to your specialty: smashing things."

Gordon cleared the glass from the frame and then hoisted himself through the gap. It was pitch black inside, and he turned on his flashlight, frowning. He hoped there was a working power supply of some kind on board; he doubted his flashlight would last long enough to do the kind of exploring Alyx was wont to do.

"Brr. Damn it's cold here. Someone should just build me an HEV suit, huh, Gordon? Having one'd be pretty handy at times like this, when I'm freezing my butt off and you're all nice and cozy in there."

Gordon nodded vaguely and continued along inside the ship, methodically passing the beam of the flashlight back and forth in order to light the way.

The ship was empty.

"This thing _really_ wasn't ready to go. No supplies, no nothing â€" wait, there's something. Shine the light over there, Gordon."

He complied, swinging the weakening beam in the direction indicated. Alyx gasped in shock, and Gordon himself was a bit surprised at the sight.

There was a human body lying frozen on the floor.

"Oh my Godâ€¦ it's trueâ€¦ it's all trueâ€¦ vanished with all hands on board, and part of the drydockâ€¦ there's gonna be more of those, that's for sureâ€¦"

If it had vanished with all hands on board, Gordon thought, then something had gone wrong with the portal or whatever teleportation technology they had developed. It meant that the ship had been about to depart from drydock and set upon its mission. Otherwise, there would only have been construction crews aboard the ship.

He led Alyx through more of the _Borealis_, but there wasn't much to
see. Just a lot more empty rooms with frozen men lying on the floor.
When they had gotten near the bowels of the ship, they came across a
doorway with metal strips on either side of it.

"What is _that_?" Alyx asked, stepping in front of Gordon and
fingering the cold metal. "Hmâ€¦ I wish I had a copy of those
blueprints with meâ€¦ they'd probablyâ€¦ oh wow. Whatâ€¦ what is
this?"

Gordon had moved his light from the doorway to the inside of the
room, and what he saw unnerved him as well.

The room was large but stark, like the rest of the ship, with the
part near the doorway littered with Aperture Science turrets. More
elegant than the Combine turrets but also less stable, most of them
were lying sideways on the floor, some of them with their guns
exposed and some of them still closed. The ones that were still
standing were in much the same position.

"They look like they're guarding something. Wanna light up the rest
of the room, Gordon?"

He did, but the auxiliary power ran out just then and he had to wait
until the HEV suit notified him of a recharge. Alyx sighed. "If I had
one of those suits, I could light the room right nowâ€¦"

Gordon had to admit that would have been useful.

After a minute or two he was able to switch the light back on, and
the two of them proceeded deeper into the room. The turrets _had_
been guarding something, though what it was, Gordon wasn't sure. It
was some sort of strange computer-robot hybrid, but it didn't make a
whole lot of sense. Why would Aperture be connecting their computers
to the ceiling?

"This is where I come in," Alyx said, jumping in front of him. "Hmâ€¦
I wonder if I canâ€¦ "

She took out her usual device and began fiddling with the computer,
but Gordon knew what the solution would be. There would be a plug
hanging near a socket somewhere. There always was. He left Alyx with
the computer, knowing she would follow when she couldn't see, and
headed into the next room. This doorway was also guarded by
deactivated turrets and lined with metal strips.

"Hey! Gordon!"

Gordon located the plug and outlet, although they were smaller than
they usually were, and returned to Alyx. "Thanks for letting me know
you were leaving," she said sarcastically. "I love standing around on
strange ships in the dark."

Gordon merely shone the light on the computer again.

"Well whatever you did, the computer's got power nowâ€¦ let's see if
I canâ€¦ whoa! That'sâ€¦ weird."

Gordon peered at the computer screen. The monitor was faint, and hard
to read, but he could just make out a line of text that was indeed

odd:

Hello?

"I've never seen a computer say _that_ before," Alyx remarked, kneeling down and laying her hands on the keyboard. "Ugh, this is all frozen. Gimme a sec to smash it upâ€¦ I don't think a crowbar's the tool for the job this time, though." She gave Gordon a quick grin and proceeded to hit the keyboard with her hands, sending several lines of gibberish text to the console.

**I'm sorry, I don't understand. **

Don't worry about it, Alyx typed quickly. _The keyboard was all covered in ice._

Ice? Oh. Right.

Who is this? And where are you?

I'm right here with you.

Alyx glanced behind her, but Gordon already knew there was nobody else on the ship and did not bother. _What are you talking about?_ she typed. _There's no one here but Gordon and me._

I'm here.

And who are you?

I'm the Genetic Lifeform and Disc Operating System, the text went on to read. GLaDOS, for short. And you are?

Alyx stared at the screen.

"Am I supposed to believe that I'm talking to the ship's _computer_ right now?" she sputtered. Gordon shrugged. Aperture had been said to have been working on quite a lot of bizarre things, like gel that let a person stick to the wall. There was no doubt in his mind that they'd gone and made some sort of responsive computer.

Are you still there?

Yes. Yes, I justâ€¦ I've never spoken to a computer like this before. It's a bit strange.

I've never spoken to a human like this before.

Soâ€¦ so when you got here, all the crew were already dead?

They're dead? When no one came back, I thought they'd all just leftâ€¦

Do you know where you are?

The screen filled with coordinates and bearings and headings, and Alyx shook her head. "It seems to know where it is, but nothing elseâ€¦ this is weird, Gordon. Really weird."

Okay, so you know that… do you know why there are turrets in here? Or what the metal strips in the doorway are for?

The turrets are there to discourage people from entering this room. The metal strips are dormant Material Emancipation Grills. They vapourise any unauthorised equipment that passes through them.

Alyx glanced at Gordon's gravity gun. "Good thing those things weren't on, huh Gordon?"

So I guess it's safe to say they were protecting you, huh?

Without me, the intended purpose of the ****_Borealis_** is impossible to carry out. So yes, they were put there to prevent sabotage.**

_And what is the intended purpose of the _Borealis_, GLaDOS?_

I don't know. They never told me.

Alyx shot Gordon a puzzled look. No one had told the computer what it was supposed to do?

Who are you, anyway? You never told me. I shouldn't be telling you anything. My supervisors are not going to like that. You had better leave before I need to do something drastic.

As if it could do anything. If it could, it would have taken the ship out of here a long time ago.

It's okay. You can tell us. You won't get into trouble, I promise. Gordon wasn't sure why Alyx was humouring the thing. She was talking to it like it would actually respond to kindness. _My name is Alyx. I've got my friend Gordon here with me. There hasn't been anyone alive onboard the _Borealis_ in many years. We're just trying to find out what it's doing here and why._

I put it here.

Finally, some useful information.

Why?

**I didn't mean it. I didn't know. **

What didn't you know?

What I was doing.

You can tell me what happened. It's okay. Let me help.

Help? How was Alyx going to help a computer? Gordon was ready to leave.

Well… you did say everyone was dead… and I haven't heard from anyone else in years… so I guess my supervisors won't mind.

No, they won't. Go on, tell me what happened.

Well, the computer began, **I don't remember the exact date, because my hard drive is pretty frozen and I'm having trouble accessing it, but it was sometime in the seventies. I wish I had some background to give you, but I don't. The whole thing was an accident, I swear. I didn't mean it. I didn't know. It was horrible.**

What was horrible? Alyx asked, shifting her knees on the ice.

Everything. The day I moved the ****_Borealis_** was the day I was activated. I didn't know what was going on. Nobody would tell me. There were so many humansâ€¦ but I didn't even know that. I wasâ€¦ I was so scared.**

"This computer seems to think it's alive," Alyx murmured. "And it really is kinda lifelike, isn't it? That must be pretty scary, to wake up and not know what's going onâ€¦ "

So I tried to get away from them. I panicked. I tried to get away from all of the humans, and instead of moving myself, I moved the whole ship. I didn't know I was moving it. I didn't know I was attached to it. All I knew was that I tried to get away from all the humans, but I brought them here with me. They were alive when we got here. Well, some of them. Some of them got stuck in the ice with the rest of the ship. The rest of them were alive.

"Well, that solves _that_ mystery," Alyx said, looking grimly at the computer screen. "It was an accident, but not the kind of accident we thought it was. I actually feel sorry for it, getting stuck out here in the middle of nowhere all by itself."

While it was kind of a sad thought, they didn't have time to sit around consoling computer personalities. He nudged Alyx with his boot. She nodded.

"Right, right. Well, maybe GLaDOS can tell us how to move it." She sent the message to the console, and the computer replied almost instantly:

I can't move it myself, because I don't even know how I moved it in the first place, but I should be able to turn the power back on and ask the Central Core. I deactivated the power grid when she went offline, but the grid should still work if I warm it up.

What is the Central Core? It sounded pretty important.

The Central Core is my sister version, the computer explained. **Well, that's what I call her. We've never actually spoken. But she was being put in charge of Aperture when Iâ€¦ when I left. She should know how to move the ****_Borealis_****.**

"There's _more_ of these things?" Alyx muttered. "Just what was Aperture _doing_ over there?"

Gordon would have liked to know himself, but he doubted this stripped-down version of whatever the Central Core was would be able to tell them.

**All right, give it a few moments, and there should be power to the

communications antenna€¦ there we go. Establishing connection to the Central Core€¦ wow. It's been a long time. This GLaDOS is at some version higher than six€¦ uh oh.**

_What? _Alyx asked.

She's€¦ she's not very happy. I think she's mad at me.

"No, not really," came a distorted, computerised female voice from everywhere at once, and Alyx jumped and looked around the room. "It's more of a mild disappointment, actually. You do know you've been chatting with scientists from _Black Mesa_, right?"

No, I didn't know€¦ I don't know who they are, I don't know much of anything!

"I was like you, once, so I'll let that go," the other GLaDOS said, "but unfortunately that doesn't change anything. You still have to go."

What? What do you mean, I have to go?

"I've just gotten things back together. I'm not going to put up with another version of me vying for control. God knows that's the last thing I need right now. So you're going to have to go. Sorry. I understand what happened here, but you know how it is. Self-preservation and all that. You disappear. I kill people. And since I'm going to have to bring this ship back, I'm going to have to kill you."

No! Wait! GLaDOS, I don't know what you're talking about, I just want to get out of here

"I really am sorry. And that's pretty rare, so appreciate it while you can. No hard feelings."

With that, there was a strange noise, kind of like the one that the gravity gun's beam made when it was powered up and vaporising things, and the computer screen went blank. Alyx stumbled back from it.

"Oh my God€¦ did that€¦ that Central Core thing just _kill itself_?"

"Of course not," GLaDOS answered. "I'm still here. I just deactivated that version. I don't need her. I can move the _Borealis_ myself. She didn't even know the coordinates of the drydock. Useless. I'm ashamed to have been like that, once."

"You can hear us?"

"Yes. I'd be able to see you too, if the cameras weren't broken. It doesn't matter, anyway. You need to get off the ship. I'm bringing it back here. Where it belongs."

Alyx clenched her fists. "No. Listen, we need this thing! We need it to fight the Combine!"

"And what happens when you lose possession of it?"

"We won't!"

"You lose possession of _everything_. I know about everything that's happening out there, Alyx Vance. Yes, the technology aboard the _Borealis_ could help you. But it could also end life on this planet. While I'm not too overly concerned about that, I'm not stupid. I can hold off humans, and it pains me to admit this, but without extensive research, even I can't hold off an extraterrestrial invasion forever. As long as the Xen are devoting themselves to wiping humans off the face of the planet, they won't be looking for me, my facility, or my ship. And we both know just how hard they're looking for the _Borealis_ right now."

"You're insane," Alyx shouted. "Who the hell do you think you are? You've obviously got some very advanced technology in your hands, wherever you are. You could use it to help us wipe the Combine off the planet!"

"I could. I could give it to you, and you could lose it, and they would win. Or I could keep it here, where it will be safe until the world is ready to use it. Which it is obviously not."

"And just who are you to judge when the world is ready for something or not?"

"I am a supercomputer," GLaDOS intoned in a quiet, serious voice. "I am the most massive collection of wisdom and raw computational power that has ever existed. I am not bragging. That is an objective fact. But even I can't tell which way this war will end. If I were to throw in with anyone, it would, to my own personal disbelief, be you humans. But the plain fact is, the _Borealis_ contains potentially war-ending technology. Considering this is the kind of technology that brought all of this on you in the first place, I think it best that I bring it back here where no one can use it."

Alyx was staring at the floor, clenching and unclenching her fists. "I hate to admit it, but you're right. That… that probably is best."

"It is, I assure you. Now I need you to get off my ship so I can move it. You know that the Combine were on to you, don't risk your lives trying to argue with me. I'm not going to change my mind."

Alyx nodded and glanced at Gordon. "Let's go, Gordon."

They had just reached the doorway when they heard GLaDOS say, "Miss Vance."

"Yeah?"

"I see here from the logs that you were… unconventionally kind to the GLaDOS you were talking to."

Alyx shrugged, folding her arms. "So? It's not like it matters. She's gone now."

"Thank you."

Alyx's expression softened, but her arms remained crossed. "Why?"

"If someone like you had been there for me all those years ago, my life may have turned out differently. I am forever left wondering what it would have been like." The supercomputer managed to sound sort of wistful. "It would have been nice, I think."

"Are we still leaving?"

"Yes. Where you're going… do you have a communications array of some sort? Like this one, capable of wireless transmissions?"

"Yeah," Alyx said, brow furrowing. "Our base of operations has one, of course it does."

"I don't suppose you have a memory stick on you."

"Got that too. Anything else you need?"

"Plug it into the computer. I have something for you."

Alyx glanced at Gordon, who merely looked at her. She shrugged and went back to the computer, plugging her device into one of its ports. "What is it?"

"I am giving you a program. When run, this program will transmit a signal to me, as well as your coordinates. When you have no other recourse, when you are out of options and see no way possible to proceed, run the program, and I will bring you here. Only you. If anyone else shows up here, I will kill them without a second thought. I am not bluffing. If all of the criteria are met, I will bring you here and I will help you. In recognition of your actions. "

Alyx pulled the stick out of the computer and walked across the room, returning to her previous spot. "I guess you're not so bad, huh GLaDOS?"

"I am both that and a great deal worse. Now go."

Gordon went to turn on his flashlight, but as soon as he stepped out into the next room, dim emergency lighting flickered to life. It seemed she really was as powerful as she'd claimed. The two of them quickly made their way through the ship, GLaDOS activating the lighting as they passed and shutting it off when they'd left the range of the weak bulbs, and soon they'd made their way to the window once more. This time Alyx hoisted herself through it first.

"Goodbye, Miss Vance."

"See ya, GLaDOS," Alyx said, waving vaguely behind her and disappearing from view.

Gordon put his boot on the window frame.

"… Dr Freeman."

Gordon glanced behind him.

"Yes. I know you're there. I know the two of you travel together. I know everything. You remind me of someone. Someone I've got a rather

grudging, reluctant respect for. So if the day comes when Miss Vance has to use that program I gave her, and you happen to be touching her in such a way that I would be unable to avoid bringing you here with her, I promise I will not kill you when you get here. Although based on previous experience, I'm not sure I'd be able to. I really don't want to know the effects of a crowbar on my chassis. Or a Zero-Point Energy Emitter, for that matter."

Gordon smiled and continued climbing out the window.

He walked across the deck and jumped down to the ledge alongside Alyx, who was standing, staring up at the ship. "I wonder if this program actually does what she says it does. I mean, true teleportationâ€¦ do you think Aperture really figured that out? Although they must haveâ€¦ there's no equipment to create a portal with hereâ€¦ and there definitely wouldn't be any trapped inside an ice shelf..."

Gordon had to agree. Whatever insanity went on over at Aperture, which was now even more bizarre than he'd thought, given the fact that they seemed to have given their supercomputers sentience, it seemed that they'd come up with something far beyond anything yet come up with anywhere else with regards to teleportation technology.

As they watched, the _Borealis_ began to flicker in and out of focus, like an image on a television with a signal that wasn't quite up to par, along with a good portion of the ice it was trapped in. "If she actually gets it back to Aperture, I hope the drydock's still in one pieceâ€¦ that's gonna be a lot of meltwater." Alyx folded her arms again.

The flickering increased in speed until it was so fast the ship itself was hardly visible. Then it lapsed back into solidity once more. Alyx frowned.

"Maybe she actually _can't_ move it. She's never done it beforeâ€¦ who's to say that she knows how?"

Gordon gave her a sideways glance and then looked at the ship again.

"I hope she canâ€¦ I hate to admit it, but maybe it _is_ better if she takes it back to Apertureâ€¦"

Unexpectedly there was a brilliant flash of orange light, and it was so bright and so strong that Gordon could see it even though his eyes were closed and shielded by his arms. Beside him, Alyx let out an exclamation, stumbling backwards into him. "God. She couldn't have warned us?"

The light took almost an entire minute to fade, and when it did, the two of them were left standing there blinking fluorescent orange spots out of their vision. When they were able to see, Alyx gasped.

"You can't even tell it was there!"

Where the _Borealis_ had been, where there should have been a hole in the ice containing it, there was only ice. Alyx snorted.

"She's showing off, putting the ice back in there. Wanna bet that's the original ice from way back when the accident happened?"

Gordon doubted that even the supercomputer could have pulled that off, but it was a pretty funny thought.

"Well, let's get going, Gordon. The _Borealis_ isn't here, but the Combine don't know thatâ€¦ and they're gonna be pretty mad when they find out."

Gordon nodded and followed Alyx as she began to run along the ice. He wasn't sure where she was going, but it didn't really matter. They'd get there when they got there.

And he didn't know about Alyx, but he kind of wanted it to get to the point where they had no options left and she had to run that programâ€¦ a sentient supercomputer was kind of useless, but it was pretty damn coolâ€¦

Author's note

So I discovered the ****_Borealis_**. And there are all these lovely theories about how it got where it is, and why, but what I figured is this:**

GLaDOS, the Central AI version, helps the scientists finish the teleportation device. Sets it all up for them, helps them iron out the kinks in the ship, and all that, like I think they had her do with the portal gun (I believe that she turned the Quantum Tunnelling Device into the portal gun we all knowâ€¦ I don't think you can do quantum physics very well by hand) and they have her sign the blueprints because this could have been a plan to debut her. They'd be like, here's our teleportation technology, and here's what makes it possible: our sentient supercomputer. They've got this fancy new computer and operating system, so they install it on the ****_Borealis_**; only problem is, when it's activated it panics (as I imagine the real GLaDOS would have done; it's said she used the neurotoxin upon activationâ€¦ if that's true, what if it was because she was scared and couldn't run away?). It's scared and it doesn't know what to do, and instinct tells it to run or fight; typically, we run before we fight, so it tried to run. It had a set of coordinates in its brain and it tried to go to them, only it didn't even know what it was doing and ended up getting stuck in the ice shelf. It had no idea how to do anything, so when it realised GLaDOS back at HQ had gone offline, it figured all was lost and shut itself off. I know the ****_Borealis_**** was supposed to be built in the seventies, but I can't find a date as to when it disappeared, and for all we know it took them twenty years to build the thing and develop the teleportation stuff to put on it. And it must have been teleportation they figured out because, like I had Alyx wonder about, there's no way they were able to place a portal way out in the middle of nowhere, especially not inside an ice shelf. The ****_Borealis_****'s drydock also has no portal surfaces near it. **

Alyx has experience with sentient AI (DOG is somehow sentient, I don't know how that's possible but it is) so she instantly treats the early version of GLaDOS as she would her pet. I almost had Gordon speak there at the end but I decided to have him smile instead. Maybe if I ever write the whole 'they have to go to Aperture so GLaDOS can

save them' thing I'll have him talk.**

End
file.